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air. The bulb of the thermometer was then placed in the point above M, in the line D K C, between the true focus of the reflector C, and the said reflector C itself, when no change took place, the mercury indicating the temperature of the atmospheric air, and only sinking when placed in the focus of the reflector C. Now this can only be explained by admitting cold to be an actual fluid, which emanating from K, was reflected from D to C, and concentrated in the focus of C. On the common theory, the mercury should have sunk lowest, when it made its nearest approach to the freezing mixture K, for there it should have parted with its caloric, in order to keep up, as far as possible, the equilibrium of its temperature with that of K.

I am your obt. servant,  
*Armagh, Feb. 2d, 1812.*      J.S.

*For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.*

#### ON TEACHING CATECHISMS IN FREE SCHOOLS.

IN reading some of the controversial writings of the partisans of the Bell and Lancasterian systems of education, my attention has been turned to the important subject of introducing creeds and catechisms into schools for the education of the poor. Joseph Lancaster's plan of confining his instructions to reading, writing, arithmetic, &c. without interfering with the catechisms of the various religious sects, is decidedly superior to the plan pursued by Dr. Bell. The partisans of Dr. Bell's system of education maintain the opinion, that the church of England catechism is an indispensable addition to instruction in spelling and reading.

Every benevolent mind must feel gratified at finding so much attention paid to the education of the

poor; but because they receive education gratis, must they be continually reminded of their dependent condition? A man who can afford to pay a few pence weekly for the education of his child, can exercise an independent judgment, and have his child instructed as he pleases; but the poor man who sends his child to a free school, where the church of England catechism forms a part of the system of education, must permit his child to repeat the catechism as the condition of his receiving instruction in the common routine of school learning. It would be as reasonable, before relieving the distress of a poor family, to require that they should repeat a catechism to accord with the peculiar opinions of the person who relieved them, as to unite a creed to the benefit conferred by teaching to read and write. Children, in general, are incapable of annexing any ideas of religion to a catechism, they merely know they must repeat it by rote as a task, and there is generally an unpleasant association of ideas in the mind of a child connected with a task.

The introduction of catechisms into schools where the children belong to different religious sects, has a tendency to keep alive the restless spirit of bigotry and intolerance which has already been so injurious to society; it makes the line of distinction between Catholics and Protestants still more strongly marked; and even if Catholics are exempted from repeating a catechism contrary to their parents' ideas of religion, an unpleasant distinction is made which destroys that equality which is preserved in a school where a catechism is not introduced. Many of the parents of children at free schools are dissenters, and they cannot consistently approve of their children being taught the church of England catechism.

If the managers of free schools would, by confining their instruction to reading, writing, &c., enlighten the children's minds, and give them the materials for thinking, without directing in what particular manner they are to think, and leave the parents at liberty to have their children instructed in creeds and catechisms in whatever form they please, more good may be expected to result from free schools, than if the managers, by attempting to do too much, gave the people reason to fear that there was a design to adopt the illiberal plan of education pursued in the charter schools.\* Y.

*For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.*

REPORT UPON THE CHARITABLE AND BENEVOLENT INSTITUTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. READ AT A PUBLIC SITTING OF THE ACADEMY OF MARSEILS, AUGUST 28, 1808, BY DR. LOUIS VALENTINE.

**I**N two preceding fragments, I have sketched the state and progress of the natural and physical sciences in the United States of America. I shall now have the honour to address you on the subject of the prisons and hospitals, and the state of the poor of that country, and the hospitality which characterizes its inhabitants.

**BEGGARS.**—Paupers are unknown in North America and almost in every maritime province of the new world. From the establishment of their first colonies in the year 1620, to 1630, the Americans studied the means to prevent mendicity and to stifle this evil in its birth. In proportion as the population increased and the unfortunate emigrants restored there, it was necessary to find resources, for those who could not obtain immedi-

ate employment, or who were incapable through age or infirmities, of maintaining themselves by labour.

It is not surprising that beggary should be still less known in the more southern provinces (except in some Spanish possessions in the interior,) and not at all in the Antilles; that affluence which the Europeans who settled there soon diffused, and which has been continually increasing, the facility with which employment of every kind may be obtained, the nature of the climate, which, in many parts renders the clothing there unnecessary which is indispensable in the North; and in short, that hospitality which characterizes the colonists, are all powerful preventatives against this evil.

It is, however, much more difficult to be avoided by the Anglo-Americans, especially in the five States of the North, which are called New-England. The severity of the climate, the inferiority of the soil, the dearth of resources, and the frequent incursions made by the Indians to recover and keep possession of their native land, cannot fail to create poverty and its attendant evils, as they exist in Europe.

The spirit of toleration and philanthropy which has pervaded every religious sect of the American States, since they established their independence; the strict attention paid to the morals of youth, as well as to their agricultural and commercial education; the facility with which the labouring class finds employment, either in tilling the lands in the West, or in erecting buildings; the extreme moderation of the land-tax, and the equal partition of their other taxes, act as general preservatives against mendicity. They cannot, however always prevent indigence: philanthropic associations and charitable institutions have therefore been formed, free of expence to the federal government, for the relief

\* For some suitable resolutions at Limerick on this subject, the reader is referred to the documents.